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IRONING A SHIRT IN SEVEN MINUTES

Broadcast by Ruth Van Deman, Bureau of Human Nutrition and home Economics and Wallace L. Kadderly, Chief of Radio Service, in the Department of Agriculture's portion of the National Farm and Home Hour, Thursday, November 18, 1943, over stations associated with the Blue Network.

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VAN DEMAN: Wallace, I want to ask you a personal question. Have you ever ironed a shirt?

KADDERLY: I never expected to answer that question in public, Ruth. But now that you've caught up with me -- you and the laundry situation -- I'll be honest. Yes, I have ironed a shirt -- and I didn't like it. It's a long and tedious process.

VAN DEMAN: You're right, it is, for most people. I have a friend who used to take about seventeen minutes to iron a shirt. Even then her husband wasn't always satisfied with the way she did it. Well, she finally got tired of that state of affairs.

KADDERLY: What did she do about it?

VAN DEMAN: A very sensible thing. She studied her ironing methods...figured out what she could do differently to iron a shirt faster and better. And do you know what happened?

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KADDERLY: Tell me. I can't wait.

VAN DEMAN: She cut her ironing time down to seven minutes.

KADDERLY: No!

VAN DEMAN: But yes. And even her very particular husband said his shirts looked much better.

KADDERLY: How'd she do it?

VAN DEMAN: First, it was a matter of analyzing the ways she ironed, and then improving on her system. The old way, she kept twisting and turning the shirt on the board -- so it looked kind of bedraggled even after it was ironed. And she kept lifting and putting down the iron for little dabs of ironing. One day she kept count, and she found she lifted her six-pound iron, and put it down, about thirty-two times for each shirt.

KADDERLY: So she tried to cut out lifting the iron and turning the shirt so often?

VAN DEMAN: That's right, Wallace. I won't take time to describe the whole process; but here are some of the highlights.

KADDERLY: I'm paying close attention -- for future reference.

VAN DEMAN: Good. Well, first my friend rolls the shirt so that when she unrolls it on the board it's right in position for her to begin ironing, without any rearranging. That way, she begins with the collar end of the shirt on the board, right side up, with the collar toward her.

KADDERLY: That sounds simple enough.

VAN DEMAN: Of course it is. With the shirt in position, my friend irons the right sleeve and the collar before she has to move the shirt. Altogether, she turns the shirt only twice -- once to do the other sleeve, and again to do the body. To iron the body of the shirt, she puts the entire shirt right side up on the board ... opens it at the front...and irons the back from the inside. Then she brings the front sections into place over the back, and irons them. Of course I should add that she has a board twenty inches wide, so she can iron the entire body of the shirt without shifting it around.

KADDERLY: I was just going to say --- You can't do that on an ordinary width board.

VAN DEMAN: But you can use the same general method. Another little trick my friend discovered: instead of twisting the material to get at gathers, and around buttons, she transfers the iron to her left hand. Saves time -- and the shirt doesn't get thatscrambled look.

KADDERLY: You know what all this sounds like to me, Ruth? It sounds like what the industrial experts call "increasing efficiency of production."

VAN DEMAN: It is pretty much the same thing, Wallace, except that homemakers call it "streamlining housework." You know, women are getting "motion-minded" about their work.

KADDERLY: I should think they would, with all the extra work they do these days.

VAN DEMAN: You know, the industrial experts -- when they set out to improve a job -- always ask five questions: Is this job necessary? Can we substitute a better method? Can we improve the order of the work? Can we improve the tools? Can we cut out excess walking?

KADDERLY: And, those are the same ideas homemakers are applying to their home jobs ...right?

VAN DEMAN: Right. Of course, every woman has to figure out her own way of simplifying her work, to suit her individual equipment and working habits.

KADDERLY: Suppose some of our Farm-and-Home friends want suggestions about streamlining their housework?

VAN DEMAN: Many of the state colleges of agriculture and home economics have publications on how to do it -- ways to make housekeeping easier and quicker. Anyone who wants to see if there are ways she doesn't already know about, to save time and work, can write to her state college and ask for material on time-saving in housework.

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